

make today have the impact of what kind of options we have both in the military and diplomatic sphere 10 and 15 years from now.

This country has controlled the skies since the Korean War, and we take it for granted. We have forgotten that we have flown a military sortie every day of every year for the past 16 years, and we have done so with the oldest fleet in the history of this country. Our newest plane, the F-16, is 30 years old. It is older than the pilots who fly it. There are F-16s at this time that are restricted as to the speed and the distance in which they can fly. We have 63 C-130 cargo planes that cannot fly if they actually have any cargo. We have KC-135s that generals in the field will not accept because the age of the plane makes it impossible to protect.

Despite our best efforts at our depots to try and fix these planes and patch them up, we cannot ignore the reality and forget we are in a difficult situation with the capacity of our military equipment. It may take, indeed, a catastrophe, the wings falling off, until we recognize the situation we are in, or find ourselves short-handed in a time of need.

The Air Force has asked for the ability of recapitalization, taking 1,000 planes they have determined to be excess and no longer funding those planes and instead putting that money into new technology. This Congress has failed to allow them to do so on many of those planes.

If we had sufficient F-22s, we could get rid of all of our F-117s and save this country over a billion dollars a year over a 5-year period of time.

While we have been playing around in America, our enemies, our allies, and maybe those who in the future will become our enemies have not been sitting still. The Chinese have added 10 percent to their military budget every year since 1990. That is a 200 percent increase over the past 17 years. Their navy is expanding. Their medium-range missiles are expanding. In January, they conducted a test to shoot down one of their own satellites which is the same type we depend upon for communications in the United States. And more significantly, their Jian-10 is a sleek new fighter aircraft designed to narrow the gap between the Chinese and the American Air Force to give them numerical compatibility and technical equality to the United States Air Force.

The Russians have a new Sukov fighter airplane that they have already fielded which is technologically equal to what we have.

We have even found a Third World country like the Indian Air Force has put so much money into their technology and training of their pilots that in many respects they are equal to the United States.

We cannot afford to wait for the future. This country needs to build the fifth generation of fighters, the F-22. We need all 183. Actually, we need 300,

not just the 183 we have authorized. We need to put money directly into the new F-35s. That is the future: 1,500 planes for both the Navy, the Marines and the Air Force to be the next generation to give us technological superiority in the skies and maintain superiority in the skies into the next decade.

If we do not do that, we are desperately playing and gambling with our own future. We forget how long it took to ramp up to be producing the F-16s we fly today. This country should be producing 200 planes a year. Instead, in our budget for next year, we have scheduled to produce six, and two in the supplemental that were taken out. We are gambling with the future of this country because we have taken the past for granted.

In fact, as one general half jokingly said, if we are not willing to appropriate the money to let our Air Force build the new equipment and planes they need, maybe we should at least give them the opportunity to purchase the Russian planes so they can be flying something that is new.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot gamble with the future of this country. We cannot make the same mistakes we did in 1938. We need to put money into the building of the F-22 and the F-35 for the future of this Air Force.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KING of Iowa addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to address the House once again. I am glad to see you there in the Chair. Also, I am glad to be joined by Mr. MURPHY and also Mr. RYAN. We are pleased Mr. RYAN can be here at the top of the 30-Something Working Group hour.

We come to the floor every week, sometimes two or three times a week, to talk about the great things that are happening here in the House, talk about how we are getting better not only as to oversight but appropriations, and also budgeting, making sure that we budget so we no longer have to borrow money from foreign nations.

The discussion here tonight is important because we have the emergency

war supplemental that is coming to the floor on Thursday. The Appropriations Committee dealt with that today. To have such an important Member like Mr. RYAN who is a member of the Appropriations Committee, they have been doing quite a bit of work. I know he has a lot to share with us making sure that we sling-shot the troops in for a win, and also the folks who have served our country, the men and women who have served our country in the past.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note there is \$1.7 billion in this bill for health care; it is \$1.7 billion more than the President has asked for. Also as relates to veterans health care, there is \$1.7 billion more than what the President requested.

We had a chart on the floor last week that talked about Democrats when we were in the minority putting forth proposals to make sure that our veterans had what they needed once they left Afghanistan and Iraq, and even for those still in the service.

We have also put additional dollars in as relates to readiness, and we will talk about that because we have some definitions we want to share with Members.

But since Mr. RYAN has been spending a lot of time in the Appropriations Committee working on these very issues, I thought I would yield to my good friend and allow him to elaborate on the very work they have been doing over the last couple of weeks. I said before you came in, Mr. RYAN, that we are so happy you are here at the top of the 30-Something Working Group hour because you are an appropriator and that is an important position.

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Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate it, and no more important than the Ways and Means Committee, of which you serve on, and all your hard work over the past 4 years in the United States Congress, previous to that in the Florida Senate, previous to that in the Florida House, following in your mom's footsteps, who was also an appropriator in the United States Congress. So it is an honor to follow in her footsteps.

I think there is a couple of very important points that we want to make in regards to this bill that we have before us on Thursday. It passed out of the Appropriations Committee last Thursday, and this, in essence, in fact, in reality, is the piece of legislation that will help change the course of our Iraq policy.

The President has had free rein for the past 5 years from a Republican Congress that just went along with everything that he wanted to do, and I found it funny this weekend, as we were watching some of the weekend shows, and I was watching Meet the Press and former Congressman Tom DeLay was on, Richard Perle, one of the top, President's top defense advisers was on, and they were arguing that

if we pull out of Iraq, that somehow the sky's going to fall, okay, and that this whole thing, that Iraq is going to turn into a catastrophe, and it is going to fall apart; it is going to spin out of control.

I just could not help but to think that these people, Mr. Speaker, have absolutely no credibility to comment on what is going on in Iraq. They can talk and they can say what they need to say, but the bottom line is they have expressed their opinion over the past 5 years, and it is difficult to find any statements that they have made that have been either factual or predictions that they have made that came true.

I want to say a couple of things about this bill that we are going to pass.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Please say it.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We are saying basically and General Petraeus is saying this. Now they are saying that we are going to need until summer to figure out whether or not the surge is working. In our bill that we are passing, that we are going to pass on Thursday, it says by July 1, which is the summer, that if by July 1 there is no progress being made, that we immediately begin to withdraw our troops down in 180 days; and if by October 1 the President does not certify that the benchmarks that he came up with are met, we begin to get out of there; and at the absolute latest, we start withdrawing March of next year and have everybody home by August of 2008.

Here is what I want to say, because here is the big argument that we had. We are saying that there are benchmarks that they need to meet, and if they do not meet them, they are deadlines, and we are coming home. What we are hearing from the other side is that you cannot have benchmarks, you cannot possibly have any benchmarks, you cannot tie the President's hands. Well, actually, it is funny.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. When did you pass this legislation? I mean, pass it out of Appropriations Committee, when did that happen?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Thursday it passed out of committee.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. That just happened. That just happened.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is right.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. On Thursday?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is right, and now all our friends on the other side are saying, you cannot possibly set a deadline, you cannot possibly tie the President's hands. Very interesting when you go back and do a little research.

In June of 1997, when our troops were on their way to Bosnia under President Clinton, House Republicans brought to the floor an amendment that would, guess what, set a timeline and a date certain for withdrawal from the U.S. peacekeeping mission in Bosnia, a mission that was only 18 months old. So all of the Republicans who say that we cannot possibly be for a timeline were for a timeline 10 years ago in Bosnia.

Now, our friend from Indiana Mr. BUYER, who we had a nice debate with over the resolution a few weeks ago, offered an amendment that by December 15, 1997, President Clinton was required to report to Congress on political and military conditions in Bosnia. By June 30 of 1998, all troops had to be withdrawn. That was an amendment that the now-ranking member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs offered in 1997, and you will never guess all of the Republicans, members of leadership today, who voted for that amendment, and now all of the sudden they are saying, you cannot possibly be for a timeline or a date certain, and on and on and on.

We will continue to go through this debate. This will be the debate the next couple of weeks, but the Republicans in 1997, some of the top leaders in Congress today, supported a date certain that we would come out of Bosnia, withdraw the troops, and that was only 18 months into Bosnia and only \$7 billion, and here we are today, 48 months, \$379 billion, and over 3,200 American lives.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. We are within our fifth year now, our fifth year, and Mr. Speaker, I always say there is nothing like the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. That is the reason why the 30-something Working Group, we like third-party validators, and we love the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD because that is the reason why we meet. That is the reason why we make sure we have what we need to have to give good, accurate information to the Members.

But we have a very important Member that is on the floor that is a member of not only the Financial Services Committee, but also Government Oversight, that has their work cut out as it relates to making sure that this government is efficient, and that is Mr. MURPHY. I think that it is very important that we hear from him and some of the information that he has to share, because a lot of the information we have now is from Mr. MURPHY's committee.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I understand the Appropriations Committee is a very important place, Ways and Means is very important.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We are all important.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. We are all important in our own ways.

Government Oversight and Reform, though, that was a committee that was a little sleepy here for the last few years. I have not been here with you for the last few years, but I was a watcher. I think I could see what was happening down here in C-SPAN. You did not see many oversight hearings. You did not see a lot from the Armed Services Committee, the Government Oversight Committee exercising what used to be the constitutional prerogative of the coequal branch, which is the legislative branch.

Here is how things have changed. Let me put this where people can see it.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Nothing like a good chart.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I want to display an important number here: 104. I will tell you why that number matters. That is the hearings on issues related to the Iraq War just this year; 104 different hearings have been held.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Those just happened.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. That just happened.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Another thing that is so very, very important, is his name David Broder, the conservative writer? I was home reading a hometown paper. Some folks in this town admit that they do not read the paper, but I do, and he wrote an article saying no blank checks out of this Congress, and it talked about oversight hearings and talked about what is happening in Justice, Mr. Speaker, and it talked about what is happening in some of the other Federal agencies. But he ended the article by saying it really does not change government. It does. This is where he is wrong. It does.

Half of the things that we know now about Walter Reed, most of the things that we know now about the Iraq war is that the Congress is now carrying out its constitutional responsibility, and that is to have oversight. So I just wanted to, just if we continue like Mr. RYAN was saying, listening to these voices of the past, saying let us stay in the same direction, oh, do not worry about having oversight hearings, where were these voices when folks were giving away millions of dollars in special interest tax cuts to the superwealthy and to the superconnected? So I think it is important we are on the right track.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. It used to be that, you are right, it was 60 Minutes and New York Times and The New Yorker. That was the oversight branch in our Federal Government. It was the press. We are thankful that they actually brought some things to light.

But what we have learned just in the first 2 months, what we have brought out in these oversight hearings are really stunning to the American people. Nine billion dollars put out in cash on wooden pallets, thrown out of SUVs in sacks as they drove down the street, unaccounted for, do not know where it went, have no idea where it went.

We have got Blackwater, a contractor out there, keeping the diplomats and some American military personnel safe. Well, we find out that the government's role in overseeing Blackwater and a lot of these other contractors, you know what we did? We contracted that out, too. We contracted that out, too. Blackwater took its responsibility and contracted somebody else, and they contracted somebody else. Everybody made a dime along the way. These were things that you did not hear about in these halls until we got here.

So the bill that you outlined, it does the right thing for our troops. It does

the right thing for our veterans. There are some other pieces that we can talk about, how it does the right thing for kids, the right things for farmers, but also does the right thing for taxpayers because it finally gives some accountability in how we spend these dollars. We would like to see an end to these dollars. But while we are spending money, at least finally we are going to have some accountability for those dollars.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The President has to deal with Congress now, and what is in this bill I think holds the President accountable. This bill does not just hold the Iraqis accountable, but it holds the President accountable.

The benchmarks that are in this supplement that we are going to pass are the President's benchmarks that he outlined in January that we need to hit. Now, if we do not hit them, then what do we do? The President says, do not tie my hands. We are saying, these are your benchmarks. We have been there for a long time, and if they do not step up, the Iraqi troops do not step up, it is time for us to go.

The bottom line is that there is no incentive for the Iraqis to step up because at this point they feel like we will stay there forever, and we are saying that we are not going to be there forever; get your act together.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I think it is important, as we start to look at this, I cannot help but reflect on the fact that as of 10 a.m. today, and that is today, that we have lost 3,222 men and women in Iraq. I mean, that is not a small number when we look at the sacrifices that have been made. Also, we are looking at another 13,415 wounded that have returned to duty, and 10,722 wounded that cannot return to duty. Then we have folks that are whining about having some accountability in what we now call 5 years later emergency supplemental funding.

I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, for the Members to understand because we want to come to the floor, we do not want a Member going back to their district saying they did not understand what was in the bill because we know it is on the other side of the aisle.

Mr. RYAN pointed that out we have some folks that are just going to vote on principle; I am going to vote against this because it was not my idea. I am going to vote against it because I am a Republican. Well, guess what? The American people voted last November for leadership, not saying that I am going to send a Democrat or Republican. We had Republicans that were tenured in this House, served 10-, 15-year terms unelected because they were following partisan politics. It is very, very important that we look at the bipartisanship in this.

I will yield because I was about to make a point on the readiness issue.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Because I have to take off a few minutes early, and I want to go through real quick, I want to talk about what these folks who say

they are going to vote against this bill, what they are voting against from the veterans' standpoint, okay.

Now, these are folks who consistently say, Mr. Speaker, we support the troops, work for the troops. We have got to get the troops back. I think we all believe that, but there will be an opportunity on Thursday to really put your voting card where all the rhetoric is.

Defense health care, we add \$1.7 billion of an increase to the President's request. Here is what you are voting against if you vote against the supplemental. You are voting against an additional \$450 million for post-traumatic stress disorder and counseling.

You are going to vote against \$450 million for traumatic brain injury care and research, and if you have been to Walter Reed, as we all have, you will see unbelievable brain injuries.

You will be voting against \$730 million to prevent health care fee increases for our troops.

You are going to vote against \$20 million to address the problem at Walter Reed, and you are going to vote against \$14.8 million for burn care.

Now, that is just defense health care. Now veterans health care. Now, we have got to support these veterans coming back; an additional \$1.7 billion above the President's request for veterans health care.

If you vote against this supplemental, here is what you are voting against.

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You are voting against \$550 million to address the backlog in maintaining VA health care facilities. You will vote against \$250 million for medical administration to ensure there is sufficient personnel to support the growing number of Iraqi and Afghanistan troops coming back. That was the major problem at Walter Reed because of the contracting issue, because some people had to make some money on the deal; \$229 million for treating the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. It is a growing number, \$100 million for contract mental health care and \$62 million to help speed up the process.

Now, there are other things in here. We are going to talk about readiness.

But if you vote against this, that is what you are voting against. I would hate to see the political commercials that may be run if you are on the other end of this thing.

I mean, that is just, I wouldn't want to be in that position, but that is what is in the bill. So rhetoric is rhetoric, action is action, and it is \$1.7 billion more for defense health care, \$1.7 billion more for veterans health care.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Before Mr. MEEK talks about readiness, let me just make one more point on top of that. It seemed that for years this Congress, the Republicans who set the policy for this war, didn't view the cost of the war as including taking care of the soldiers when they came back from

Iraq and Afghanistan, that the cost of the war was just the money for the Humvees and the salaries and the missiles and the rifles. No, the cost of the war is all of what it takes to actually conduct that war on the battlefield, but it also is about putting forth every single dollar that is necessary to take care of those brave men and women when they come back to the United States.

Now, used to be in World War I, World War II, wars in the middle of the century that you would have about three injured soldiers for every soldier that was killed in action. Now, with improvements in technology in armor and medicine, we now have a 16-1 ratio. That is great news. That is great news, more people are coming back alive, but they are coming back with more difficult injuries, more complex medical issues. We haven't built into that war the cost of taking care of those veterans.

That is what this bill does. That is what this bill does. It is going to fund the withdrawal. It will fund the redeployment of our forces to fights that we still can win. It will also for the first time, for the first time, recognize that the cost of the war includes taking care of the veterans, not just average health care. In fact, we found out in many cases, in Walter Reed substandard health care, but with gold standard health care. Our veterans system should be the best health care available in this country.

With \$1.7 billion in defense health care, \$1.7 new dollars for veterans health care, we will finally live up to that commitment to our veterans and our soldiers when they get back here, like we should when they are over fighting for us.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. MURPHY, I think it is important for us to look at the following line. This bill puts also enforcement behind what is already out there. There is no policy risk here in this bill. We know that the Iraq Study Group says that we should have timelines. That is in this bill.

We know that the military, as it relates to readiness, and we know that there are four basic components to readiness, you have, for instance, we have 100 Striker brigades that are in our military right now. We know in every Striker vehicle you have to have a commander, a gunner and a driver. We need to make sure that we have all three of those components before we send a Striker force into Iraq or Afghanistan. That is in this bill, and that is what the military calls for.

I think it is important to also outline that there is not a National Guard unit that is right now in our National Guard force that is combat ready. Right now, I say that with great confidence. We don't have that right now. I am on the Armed Services Committee because I know this stuff. I mean, I know this stuff because we talk about it.

We talk about the fact that we are not ready to do the things that we need

to do as it relates to equipment maintenance. In many parts of the theater we don't have what we need to keep heavy vehicles moving. We look at the reason why we don't have up-armored vehicles, in some instance, going out on patrol. If you ask some here in Washington DC, that is every time, but not all the time.

In Baghdad, this is very, very important, the training and making sure that everyone is trained and have what they need to have to carry out the task within a brigade is very, very important.

In this supplemental we are meeting the needs of the Army as it relates to what they need. I think it's 36,000 troops, additional troops. They need an Army, and we are also increasing the Marines by three brigades, if Members want to vote against this piece of legislation.

I think it's also good to outline in 2001, we were at 80 percent of readiness. When we say "readiness," everyone was trained and equipment was in place to be able to deal with it. We haven't been down at the numbers or the level we are now as it relates to readiness or a lack thereof since the end of the Vietnam War.

In this day and time when we have Iran and we have Syria and we have North Korea and we have other countries of interest to the United States as it relates to a threat, now more than ever we need to make sure that we are there not only for the troops but also for the American people.

I think it is also important to shed light on the fact that there are several other great things that are in this bill, \$2.6 billion to deal with Homeland Security issues that were not dealt with, Hurricane Katrina relief, \$2.9 billion, also as it relates to urgent State children's health care and insurance needs at \$750 million, urgent needs for pandemic flu preparedness at \$1 billion.

As we start to look at and uncover in these hearings, as some talk about, that are a waste of time, we start looking at the gaps of the lack of oversight and a lack of execution on behalf of programs and initiatives that will make our troops' lives better, those that are enlisted, those that are Reservists, to be able to secure our troops that are in theater at this time, many of whom are in the areas of great danger and constant fire, and also looking at the needs of the country, of the everyday American people.

Now, it is interesting because the minority side, the Republicans over there, when we start looking at some of them, when we start looking at some of these votes that have taken place, many of the Members of the leadership, if not all, have voted against commonsense legislation that we passed on a bipartisan basis.

I mean, we had a number of Republicans voting for bills that were brought up by this Democratic Congress. You look at implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations, we

had 299 votes, Democrats voted in the affirmative, we had 299 overall votes, 86 of those individuals were Republicans. Minimum wage, to be able to raise minimum wage, 315 with 82 Republicans joining us.

Also, you have funding enhancement for stem cell research, 253, and a majority of Members voted for that bill. Thirty-seven Republicans joined us making prescription drugs affordable for seniors. H.R. 4, 255, it passed with 24 Republicans joining us. Cutting the student loan interest rates in half, H.R. 5, 356, with 124 Republicans joining us.

Again, creating long-term energy initiatives, H.R. 6 passed, 264, with 36 Republicans joining us.

Now, I can tell you tomorrow or Thursday, there will be a number of individuals thinking about how they are going to vote. But I can tell you this, there are several things that we can say about this emergency supplemental that is really, really good for the country, and there are also eight or nine points that I can point out that are leadership calls. You have to be a leader to take a position on anything, and I think we have some Members on the minority side that don't want to take a position.

Let me go back to David Broder's article that he wrote, and the Members can get it at miamiherald.com; it was March 18. It should still be on, you can get it for free on the World Wide Web: "Congress won't sign any more blank checks," but it goes on down to paragraph 6 and talks about the fact that for 6 years the Bush administration and the aids that they are talking about earlier in the bill would have free rein on carrying out whatever political policy or assignment they wished, and also the President. Let's just say hypothetically, that the President wanted this done.

A Congress, under a firm Republican control, was solemn when it came down to oversight of the executive branch. No Republican committee chairman wanted to turn rocks over as it relates to the Republican administration.

I think it's important that we have the kind of forward lean that we have now, because that is what the American people have called for. They asked for accountability. They asked for oversight. They asked for Members of Congress to come here and be Members of Congress, not just say Mr. MURPHY is my friend, and we all get along and I see him in the hall, he wears nice ties, what have you, is a member of Financial Services and also Government Oversight.

They didn't send us here to have great relationships and to slap each other in the back. They sent us here to provide the kind of leadership that they deserve. The bottom line is, when that bill and this emergency supplemental bill comes up, war supplemental comes up on the floor, we will have to take a position. We have to answer for the fact that we have put benchmarks in this bill saying that the

Iraqi Government, their feet have to be held to the fire, because, guess what, back in my district there are mayors and there are county commissioners and there are city commissioners and there are school board commissioners and there are constituents of mine that want health care, and their feet are being held to the fire. Mayors have to fill out more paperwork. I guarantee you the mayor of Baghdad has to fill them out too as it relates to Federal dollars.

You talked about in the early days of voting money on the back of a truck and passing out cash money to pay government workers in Iraq and to do other things that we know very little about now. We also know that weapons that we bought are unaccounted for at this time.

To say that we are the so-called board of the United States of America, and the President is the chief CEO, the chief executive officer, we are not carrying out our responsibilities, making sure that the President does exactly what he said he would do, making sure that Iraqi government does what they said they would do. We need to make sure that our men and women don't have to speak under their breath as it relates to readiness, as they board a plane to go to Kuwait to then be shipped to Iraq, that they don't have what they need in a Striker brigade, that they don't have what they need as it relates to the training or the equipment or the down time that they deserve, not a rotation based on some bureaucrat in Washington DC saying, well, we need three more brigades in Iraq.

Oh, well, I know they have only been home for 120 days, but we need them there to keep up our troop level there at over 147,000. I must add, where other countries have announced or have withdrawn, we have replaced them with American troops. Yes, this is a leadership vote, and, yes, some of us are going to have to go to the wizard and get some courage and come here and vote on behalf of the supplemental.

Now, I respect folks having different opinions, but this is a far better supplemental bill than Members in this Congress have voted on in the past. We have voted on at least two of them since I have been here. I can remember two of them, and they did not have benchmarks. They just had money in the bill saying trust the President and trust the Department of Defense, they know what they are doing.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Blank checks.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Guess what, the American people have said, I don't like that. I don't want to do that any more.

So now we have the opportunity to put the language in the bill that would hopefully get us to the point where the Iraqi Government will say, wow, the U.S. Government is no longer playing around with us. The American people are no longer playing around with us.

We will actually have to perform. We will actually have to turn out the troops and keep the retention as it relates to our security forces and to secure our own country. We are not going to be there forever. We are going to make sure of that.

For those that are saying we have to be there as long as we have to be there, I am saying that there has to be benchmarks. I am saying \$500 billion has been spent in this war thus far and will continue to be spent unless someone stands up and takes the responsibility on.

I commend the Speaker, commend the leadership, commend every Member that has put their shoulder to the wheel and said this must be done now, not next year, not 3 years from now, not maybe we will think about it one day. The bottom line is there are folks here saying we don't want to let down Iraqi people but, guess what, I don't want to let down a U.S. taxpayer.

I don't want to let down that individual that is sitting in a veterans hospital now hoping and wishing they could get the kind of good care if the Congress was to stand behind them. It's not a gift issue as it relates to the majority here in this House. It is when we vote on this bill Thursday they will be able to see the accountability they deserve. We have a process, get it through to the President.

This President can go on and on about how he will veto it, but I remember all of the tough talk. I have gone to the White House; I have spoken to the President. I don't have to talk in third party. I have done that. I don't have to have someone tell me what the President said.

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The President said, even in his speech as it relates to the escalation of troops, well, we know that the people know that, yes, they are passing a non-binding resolution now. It is non-binding, but there will be a binding resolution as it relates to the emergency supplemental. And I agree with the President; yes, it was nonbinding, and, yes, we had a vote. And I told the President that bill will pass overwhelmingly against your initiative and escalation of troops in Iraq. He said, yes, KENDRICK, I do know that will happen, but there will be a binding resolution. And this is the binding resolution. And if the President wants a blank check, he is just not going to get it. And he has to come through this House of Representatives, he has to go through the Senate. And it is something we have to hold this government's feet to the fire, the Iraqi Government's feet to the fire, or you might as well start going back home, Members, and sharing with your constituents, how old is your son? Oh, he's 12? Well, he is going to be going to Iraq one day, and he is going to do it because it is going to continue to go on and on and on if we keep following the Bush philosophy.

And there is nothing wrong with our volunteer force. We have some individuals that graduated from high school and want to go into the Army. I am all for that. I help recruit on behalf of armed services. But I think it is important that we do not give our men and women a fixed deck because we weren't man enough and woman enough and leader enough to vote on their behalf for their accountability measures so they will have what they need when they go into theater.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. MEEK, I can't match your level of articulateness, but I think you are saying what people feel out there. I mean, this election had to mean something. I mean, people spoke, they went out there in numbers in parts of the country that we haven't seen in a long time. And they spoke with a pretty loud voice that they wanted a different course of direction in Iraq.

Now let me read something somebody said a few years ago in 1997. Mr. RYAN, when he was joining us here, talked about the fact that there is a little bit of double talk this week from folks on the other side of the aisle, this idea that Congress really needs to back off and let the President do his business. Well, that wasn't the line coming out of here in 1997, when Congress thought something very different about the oversight responsibility of this body when it came to the effort in Bosnia.

The chairman of the Armed Services Committee at that time was a gentleman named Floyd Spence from South Carolina. Here is what he said. This is his floor statement supporting the bill that was going to withdraw funding essentially from the President's intervention in Bosnia. He said, today's vote will call for the withdrawal of U.S. ground troops from a peacekeeping operation of growing expense and seeming unending duration. Mr. RYAN already told us that if that was unending duration, well, then you haven't seen unending duration compared to this effort. He went on to say, the time is long overdue for Congress to express its will on behalf of the American people. It is important that the Clinton administration be held accountable for the Nation's foreign policy and, in this case, for Bosnia policy. Let me say it again. It is long overdue for Congress to express its will on behalf of the American people.

You know what? I agree. That is what we are sent here to do. We are sent to invoke on this floor the will of the American people. That is why we get elected every 2 years instead of every 6 years, because we are the body here, the House of Representatives, and I have only been here for a couple of months, but I have studied enough history to understand that my responsibility when I came here was to speak on behalf of my constituents. And my constituents and the constituents of those that sent new Members here in droves from all over the country, from the Midwest to South, the Sun Belt,

the West and the Northeast, said, set a new course. Stand up to the President. Redeploy our forces for fights that still matter. Protect us at home. That is the will of the American people. That is what we are going to be talking about this week.

Mr. MEEK, I think elections mean something. And I think what we are going to engage in on Thursday is an effort to put the will of the American people into practice here.

Now, it is not just the American people. We just saw a poll the other day that came out and asked specifically whether the American people would support Congress' plan to bring American forces back home and redeploy them to other fights across the globe that we can still win by the fall of 2008, the bill that we are about to vote on this week, and it wasn't even close. A margin of over 20 percent, 59 percent to 34 percent of Americans support that plan. The American people said what they wanted on election day. And when pollsters went to just double-check the temperature and make sure they still thought that, well, they still think that, in fact, probably in greater numbers than they did on election day, seeing that things have only gotten worse on the ground and the President's policy has only become more meandering.

But we don't just have to listen to the American people, because we can also listen to our foreign policy community. We put on that Iraq Study Group some of the brightest minds in American foreign policy. The folks that have set the direction for foreign policy coming out of Washington for years all got together, Republicans and Democrats, folks that probably hadn't agreed on much of anything if you were to poll them on other foreign conflicts. Well, they all came to an agreement, and they sent a report to us saying it is time to set a new direction, it is time to start redeploying forces in 2008.

We can also listen to our military leaders as well. And we have read a lot of quotes on this floor, so we won't belabor it, but just take one. The Deputy Commander of Multinational Forces in Iraq said it very simply: It's clear, you cannot solve this problem militarily. You have to do it with a combination of military, economic and diplomatic things that we have to do.

The American public, our foreign policy community, military leaders on the ground who see this on a day-to-day basis say the same thing: We have put our men and women in the middle of a civil war. We have done virtually nothing to address the underlying causes of that religious conflict. And to simply allow them to continue to be the referee in an increasingly bloody battle, that is not the right policy for our troops, it is not the right policy for this country, and it is time to start focusing on real security issues again.

Let me bring up one last thing, Mr. MEEK, before I yield back, what is included in this bill. This isn't just about, you hear this word withdrawal,

this isn't about withdrawal. This is about focusing our efforts as a Nation on the fights that matter. We still have a real important conflict in Afghanistan. If we redirect some efforts there, we can still make a difference on the ground. Remember, that is where the people that attacked this country trained. That is where they base their operations. And if we are not careful, Afghanistan is going to fall right back into the hands of the folks who provided cover for so long to Osama bin Laden and his henchmen.

We also have to do a lot more here on the ground in our own country, Mr. MEEK. Now, you voted for efforts on the Democratic minority for years to try to bring light upon the fact that we have been spending billions of dollars over in Iraq. We haven't been spending money here at home to do the things we need to do to protect this Nation.

So this bill is going to put \$2.6 billion into homeland security needs, make sure that you and me and our families and our friends are protected here; \$2.6 billion, Mr. MEEK; \$1.25 billion for aviation security, including 1 billion for a new explosive detection system, \$90 million to deploy advanced checkpoint explosive detection equipment and screening techniques, \$160 million to do better when we are screening air cargo, \$1.25 billion for new port and transit and border security features, \$150 million for nuclear security, including, at the President's request, \$67 million to secure the nuclear material in the former Soviet Union.

Here is where the fight is; it is in places like Afghanistan, it is at our ports, it is on our borders. That is the fight that we are going to engage in. That is where we are going to refocus our efforts.

This vote that is coming up this week is about doing just what the Republicans told us we were supposed to do in 1997; that is, expressing the will of the American people on this floor. This vote is about putting our forces, putting our money where the fights matter most.

Mr. MEEK, I am going to be proud to be part of that this week when we finally get that chance to make the will of the American people the law of this country.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You know, Mr. MURPHY, it is so refreshing to hear you speak about this legislation, especially being fresh off the campaign trail, especially being a new Member of Congress. And I can tell you that as long as you continue to keep that spirit, and Members of this House and the majority continue to keep the spirit of wanting to do everything that you said you would do on the night that you were elected.

You know, many of us gave these great speeches, Mr. Speaker, talking about when we get to Washington, this is what we will do, and that I am going to be there for you, and that I am going to make sure that you get the kind of accountability that you deserve. I am

going to make sure that your tax dollars are being spent in an appropriate way. I am going to make sure that we take care of the troops. I am going to make sure that we hold this administration accountable. And then many times in the past, not this time fortunately, but many times in the past, a Member gets here to Washington, DC, starts walking around the Halls of Congress; a couple of folks call you Congressman or Congresswoman, you have a parking space downstairs. You know, folks, military folks, salute you when you get off a plane. You travel over into a foreign land, and in a motorcade going down the street, and then you forget about all those things. And I am so glad, Mr. MURPHY, that you have that spirit still in your heart. And there are a number of Members of Congress who still have that spirit.

And, Mr. Speaker, the reason why sometimes I get a little animated and a little excited about the fact that we have some Members here in the House who are willing to be followers when it is time for them to be leaders, and to take a position on anything, it doesn't matter what it may be; if it is changing, you know, the color of the paint in your office, it takes leadership to be able to do that because you have to stand behind that decision.

The decision saying that we want to make sure that the readiness level of our troops before they are put into harm's way is an important decision to be made and a decision that has been endorsed by the Defense Department. This is not new language, this is not a new idea, this is something that has to be placed into this supplemental to make sure the Defense Department does exactly what they said they would do in their own policy. We are not putting forth any new benchmarks for the Iraqi Government; this is what the President said. This is what he said, this is what came out of his mouth, that they have to meet these benchmarks, or we will no longer continue to do the things we have been doing. So that is the reason why it is in writing.

It is almost like when you talk to someone on the phone, and you have a health care crisis, and you call down to the hospital and you say, listen, I have a problem, I need you to help me out. You are talking to a person on the phone. First of all, you may say, can I have your name, please; who am I speaking with? Or another example: If I'm looking for financing for my house, and I am talking to someone on the phone, and they say, yes, sure, we can give you a very low interest rate, a 3.2 percent interest rate. Hey, can you give me that in writing?

What we are doing here in this emergency supplemental is we are giving the American people and our men and women in harm's way a supplemental in writing. It is not a speech. We are not talking to the Kiwanis Club, even though we have great Kiwanis Clubs out there, don't get me wrong. We are not at a Rotary luncheon giving those

speeches back home saying, "I love the troops, I love the troops." We are putting it in writing. We are not saying we love the veterans, when the veterans come up here to look at this great Capitol and see the flags flying over the House Chamber and over the Senate and over the dome of the Capitol and over the office buildings and all, proud to be an American, proud that they had something to do with allowing us to salute one flag. It is not about a little speech I give out on the sidewalk thanking them for help. They want to see it in writing. They want to make sure we have their back.

This is a leadership call, you have to make a decision. And the bottom line is we have been elected and federalized by our constituents to make decisions. And I can guarantee you, Mr. MURPHY, there is not a Republican voter or a Democratic voter or any Independent voter who has a problem with accountability, and that is what this bill does.

Now, someone may have a problem with the fact that they didn't do what they needed to do when they were in the majority to do it. And now we have provided an opportunity, and I have pointed out all of the votes here earlier, and then some, of the opportunities that we have allowed Republicans to have a bill that they wanted to vote for all along to the floor, and they voted in the affirmative, even though their leadership voted the other way. Now, that is for their leadership to say that they are accountable to their constituents because they decided to vote against something good.

But when you look at this emergency supplemental, this emergency supplemental is the first time since this war has started, Mr. MURPHY, Members, Mr. Speaker, the first time that the President actually would have a document in writing that passed in the affirmative on this floor to say that the Iraqi Government will meet these benchmarks, or redeployment will stop; to say we will make sure that we invest in veterans health care and giving Homeland Security what they need to be able to carry out the duty and protection of the homeland.

It also says, Department of Defense, pulling a page out of your own regulations, and we are going to put it in the bill to make sure that you actually do it, not just some bureaucrat sitting over there at the Pentagon saying we have to find three more brigades from somewhere, if they are ready or not, we have to make sure that we have the numbers in Iraq. If that soldier has only been home for 120 days, and we call for 200-plus days of downtime with their families to be able to regroup from being in a battle zone, those are rights that our men and women have. So we are no longer leaving that decision up to some bureaucrat in the Pentagon to make on behalf of an American who goes off to fight on our behalf.

Now, is there language in there in case of emergencies; you know, if the

President, within the national interest that we have to redeploy, we have to send these troops back into the theater? Of course there is.

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Are we hindering the President from him being Commander in Chief? No, we are not. But what we are saying is that there are rules, and you have to live by those rules. And it is going to be a majority vote here in this House, and the question, Mr. Speaker, how many Members are going to be with us when we make that majority vote here in the House to set forth the parameters of success on behalf of not only the men and women in uniform, but those that have worn the uniform and those that have been injured and cannot return back to battle, and even for those that are going to battle, that they have exactly what they need.

We know that we have the number one best military, most able military on the face of the Earth. But at the same time, we have to have respect for that military and making sure that the men and women have what they need and their families.

Mr. MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. MEEK, this is about government. I mean, you talk about leadership, it takes leadership to govern.

You are right. I am as close as anybody to what is happening and what people are feeling out there because I spent the last 2 years spending every day and every night visiting the pasta suppers and the pancake breakfasts really, I think, being as in touch as anybody in this Chamber is with where the American people were. And, yes, they have specific irreconcilable grievances with this President about the war, about his approach to energy policy, about his lack of any understanding of health care dilemmas facing the American people.

But I think they also just have this sense that this place is broken down, that Congress couldn't govern any longer, that they couldn't maintain their relationship as a coequal branch of government with the President, that they couldn't even get anything done on meaningful issues like health care reform or immigration or oversight of this war.

So is this bill perfect? Absolutely not. Are there things that you would change in it, things that I would change? Would I move a date around here, some money around there? Absolutely. But you know what? This isn't a place where you just come and vote your preferences. I mean, we are not voting for the American Idol here. We are governing. We are putting votes together to make progress for the American people. And so there are going to be a lot of folks who are going to cast green votes for this, who are going to have problems with certain parts of it. But in order to live up to what the American people want us to do here, which is to set a new direction, we

have all got to come together and find a way to govern. It is something that wasn't happening here for a very long time.

And so I am going to be proud to go back, once we get through this process, once we are able to put something through the House, through the Senate, we hope get the President's signature, I am going to be proud to go back and talk about it, talk about how we have fulfilled that commitment to redeploy our troops, to start spending our money in different places.

But I am going to be just as proud to tell them that Congress is working again; that there is leadership here that is willing to take some tough stands, that is willing to ask some people to cast some votes that might not be perfect for them; that we haven't allowed the perfect to be the enemy of the good, as a lot of people are talking about these days. I am going to be just as proud to talk about how this place is working again, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, I can tell you, Mr. MURPHY, it has definitely been a pleasure and a joy to be here on the floor with you tonight. And I know that I have some information that you want to share with the Members that may want to get in contact with us.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. MEEK, the Speaker's 30-something Working Group, and I have been blessed for the last 2 months to be able to join you here on the floor and to have Speaker PELOSI allow us the time. Anything that you want to talk to us about, you can e-mail at 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov, a lot of the information that we talk about here, as well as information about the 30-something Working Group, at www.speaker.gov/30something.

Mr. MEEK, we hope the people will get in touch with us there.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, I know the good people of Connecticut have been well served. And we also want to thank, Mr. Speaker, Mr. RYAN for coming down at the top of the hour to spend about 20 minutes with us. That is pretty good for an appropriator.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. They were quality 20 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. It was a good quality 20 minutes, I must add. And, Mr. Speaker, it is always an honor and a pleasure to address the House, and I mean the full House. I think it is important that we continue this discussion. As you know, we are going to be dealing with the emergency supplemental on Thursday, and next week we are going to get into the budget. These are real issues.

Timelines will be met. All the appropriations bills are moving through the process. They will be passed on time. We will no longer be in the business of continuing resolutions.

This is so, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say, I used to say in the 109th Congress, I mean, it is kind of rough when you go in front of your hometown and

you say, well, I am a Member of the 109th Congress. It is almost like kind of saying like you are a bad guy. But in the 110th Congress, I must say, and every Member of Congress, I am not talking about just some Members, I am talking about every Member because there were so many issues that were going on here in Washington, D.C.

But now we have the opportunity to work on behalf of the American people. We have the opportunity to do good things for veterans. We have the opportunity to do great things for children that are on military bases. We have an opportunity to make sure that our troops have what they need when they go into harm's way. And that is something we should all feel good about, on both sides of the aisle.

And I think that, come Thursday, Members will have a work product that they will be able to vote for and not think about. I mean, I feel sorry for the Members who have to walk around and say, goodness, I have to vote not to fund operations of troops that are in harm's way. They shouldn't walk around with that burden. They should be able to say that we cannot, I voted for the supplemental. I voted for it twice. They didn't have the parameters and the benchmarks that I wanted in it. But for the greater good, to make sure that our men and women have what they need, Mr. MURPHY, if they are in there doing what they were told to do, that they must have what they need.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that we will continue this debate, and we will also continue to do the good work up here in Washington, D.C.

THE OFFICIAL TRUTH SQUAD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARNEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Speaker so much for the opportunity to come and address the House once again.

Once again I want to thank the Republican leadership for the opportunity to bring another edition of the Official Truth Squad. The Official Truth Squad is a group of folks on the Republican side who got together and were interested in trying to bring about some correction to the disinformation and the misinformation that so often happens here in Washington.

Listening to my friends on the other side of the aisle for the past couple of minutes, I feel like I am in Alice in Wonderland. They have gone through the looking glass and it is difficult to tell what is real and what is not.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I believe we have entered a new phase of democracy in our Nation. And I call it Orwellian democracy. What it means is that the majority party, whatever the majority party says is accomplished,